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Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development

Statement submitted by non-governmental organizations participating in the Economic and Social Council Non-Governmental Organization Forum (Part I)

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2006/100

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Statement

The ECOSOC NGO Forum-Part I was successfully held on 6 April 2006 in New York with participation from over 100 attendees, including representatives of the NGO community, academia, private sector, Member States and representatives of the UN system. Issues of employment and labor standards have assumed a global dimension as trade and investment flows have come to be of increasingly important influence on domestic employment prospects and policy options.

The Forum was organized by UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO-Section/UNDESA in cooperation with the Conference of NGOs (CONGO) and the World Federation of UN Associations (WFUNA), representatives of the UN system, NGOs, academia, the private sector and other member states. In addition, several member states of ECOSOC also attended the Forum as observers including Ambassador Ismael A. Gaspar Martins, Permanent Representative of Angola and Ambassador Francis Lorenzo, Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations.

Introductory remarks by H.E. Ambassador Ali Hachani summed up the work accomplished in the two-day meeting preceding the NGO Forum at the Informal Preparatory Meeting of the 2006 High-Level Segment of the Council.

Among others notable speakers were Mr. Djankou Ndjonku, Director, Liaison Office International Labor Organization (ILO), Mr. Sarbuland Khan, Director, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, UNDESA, Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, Under-Secretary General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Mr. Hubert Bouchet, Representative of the Association of Economic and Social Council and Similar Institutions (AICESIS), Mr. Ben Morris, Mayor of Slidell, United States of America, Ms. Jackie Shapiro, Vice President of CONGO (Conference of NGOs in relationship with the United Nations), Ms. Pera Wells, Director of the New York Office of World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) Ms. Jemma, International Conference of Free Trade Unions, and Represntatives from World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), PDHRE, Hadassah Foundation, FUNGLODE, Observatory for Cultural and Audiovisual Communication (OCCAM), University of Oklahoma, World Family Organization, SUNLAND Traders, Fundacion Alvarice, Droit à l'Energie, Mr. Sylvan Barnett from Rotary International and Mr. Christopher Hansen, Inter-American Institute for cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), FORMIT Foundation and Give them a Hand' Foundation.

Recommendations from:
Recommendation addressed to the Economic and Social Council

1. In light of the system-wide efforts to engage young people in the Organizations activities, the Council might also wish to consider tapping into another huge source of potential partners in the education system that could bring support to the MDGs, specifically secondary schools, particularly those interested in girls' education through the appropriate superintendents.

2. Noting that although the UN mandate to promote full employment dates back to the charter there has been a tendency for the international economic organizations to pursue their major goals relegating employment to the side as a possible derivative not a central objective.

3. Observing that there had been a tremendous civil society campaign last year to 'make poverty history' and that it was very important to ensure the continuing close engagement of civil society in the focus ECOSOC was now giving to work and employment issues.

Recommendations from the NGO Forum

Participants welcomed the decision taken at the 2005 world summit to adopt the theme of the 2006 ECOSOC High Level Segment

1. In so far as the Millennium Project Report is being used as the blue-print for MDG-based Poverty reduction strategies at national level, the Decent Work Agenda with its four-tier definition should be integrated into its methodology of policy interventions and monitoring around a set of goals, targets and indicators.

2. ILO indicators should be used to measure progress on policy implementation of MDG-based poverty reduction strategies.

POLICY INTERVENTION BASED ON THE DECENT WORK AGENDA

Increasing employment opportunities and productivity of labor for the low income groups in the rural and urban informal sector.

3. Governments, as an urgent target of their economic policies should prioritize employment-intensive approaches to job creation for the working poor, in areas such as:

(a) Infrastructure, including road construction and maintenance to bring rural produce to markets, affordable housing, and public works schemes.

(b) Jobs and services to the poor. Such schemes will result in income transfers to the poor through job-creation, increased market opportunities for local produce, and improved shelter.

4. Infrastructure projects should use appropriate procurement procedures to ensure the targeting of socially responsible local entrepreneurship for the supply of inputs, and the contracting of attendant services within the community. Such projects should be coupled with longer-term strategies to stimulate the productive base of local economies and overcome supply-side constraints: lack of skills development and credit for small-scale enterprises.

UPGRADING THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

5. Low productivity, low skills and the limited options and vulnerability of the socially and economically excluded are the overall characteristics of these workers Governments should establish training, skills-building and development programmes aimed at moving informal sector actors and activities into the formal economic sector.

6. National Governments must ensure that this particularly deprived population will be able to benefit from the upgrading programme by providing health and sanitation facilities, etc. Such initiatives are strongly supported thereby effectively formalizing the informal economy. Guaranteed adequate and equal access to health care, including (HIV/AIDS) recognizing the special health needs of women and

youth, as well as the elderly and disabled, must be met to enable them to pursue productive employment.

7. Capacity-building for community organizing and the exercise of leadership with a view to giving workers a voice in local governance and decision-making on development issues affecting the community, should also be a key component.

8. Governments should take steps to ensure that the necessary rights are included in the legal and judicial systems to address the lack of legal recognition for workers in the informal economy who, oftentimes are not covered by labor legislation and social protection provisions.

9. Increasing the availability of credit to low-income producers must be a priority for the Decent Work Agenda. Micro-finance Institutions (MFIs) have an important role to play in this regard, and progress has been encouraging.

10. Tools need to be developed to monitor and mitigate risk and to ensure favorable concessional terms on loans, so that loan repayments are not burdensome, and services could be expanded to a much larger number of poor people.

(a) A regulatory framework must be put in place to simplify procedures for the establishment and functioning of MFI's serving low-income producers and the poor.

(b) Measures must specifically target women entrepreneurs and ensure that they are not excluded from opportunities to obtain credit.

COOPERATIVES

11. National governments should engage all the major actors in social dialogues to design policies and programmes that support and maximize the usefulness of cooperatives.

12. National governments particularly those with large populations of rural poor should consider supporting agricultural cooperatives to create employment in areas such as production, marketing, credit, insurance and transportation.

13. Cooperatives should also be encouraged to provide more quality job opportunities for youth, women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

WOMEN

14. Because of women's tremendous responsibilities, as well as innumerable gender-based discriminations, it is particularly difficult for women to take advantage of opportunities to increase their levels of education and skill. The inability of women to work themselves out of poverty limits the educational and life prospects of their children which lead to inter-generational transmission of poverty.

15. Believing that the Millennium Development Goals are not achievable without a focus on ending the poverty of women, participants urged governments to redouble their efforts to: Ensure that women have equal access to resources, wealth and opportunities.

16. Educational programmes for women including literacy, job training, life skills and building self confidence should be developed with training programmes designed to take into account the gender dimensions.

17. Decision makers should encourage gender-based research into the root causes and solutions to poverty, disseminate the results and act on the recommendations.

YOUTH

18. Young people are more than three times as likely as adults to be unemployed. Recent waves of unrest among youth in some countries, including in Europe and constant threat faced by countries in or emerging from conflict by their inability to find work of any kind for its unemployed youth constitute a "time bomb" for the international community.

19. Beyond facilitating job-entry, national youth employment strategies must focus, as a matter of primary concern, on developing the young person's ability to stay on the job and progress towards goals of professional development.

INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

20. Economic and Social Council and the United Nations system as well as state agencies and development institutions are called upon to fully recognize and take into account the indicators of Well-Being for Indigenous Peoples developed by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues as an alternative to definitions of poverty and development based on the needs of the global economy and the multinational corporation it best serves.

21. We call upon ECOSOC and the UN system, as well as states, agencies and development institutions to fully recognize and take into account the results of this groundbreaking effort as an alternative to definitions of poverty and development based on the needs of the global economy and the multinational corporations it best serves.

22. Member states should grant to immigrant and migrant workers, including irregular immigrants, the same rights afforded to other workers, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Conventions of the International Labour Organization.

23. Member states should reduce the root causes of worldwide migration by eliminating discriminatory trade and economic policies in the industrialized North.

24. Agricultural subsidies in the global North continue to disrupt local, agriculture-based economies in poor nations, and trade agreements tend to allow for the free flow of goods, capital, and profits across borders, but not the free flow of people (i.e. labor).

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

25. Agriculture and land based income extreme poverty continues to be mainly a rural phenomenon: the majority of the world's 1.5 billion poor and food insecure

live in rural areas, where they depend on agriculture and land-based productive resources, including forestry and fisheries for their livelihoods.

26. Policy and institutional support should be designed for the reinforcement of rural institutions and capacity-building, including farmers' and other producers' organizations, cooperatives, micro and medium enterprises, workers' unions, grassroots organizations and national institutions, and contribute to creating an enabling environment for interventions.

PROTECTING LIVESTOCK AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS

27. UN and national disaster systems need to protect both people and animals, which need each other. Adequate resources must be provided to move both people and personal and livestock animals to shelter.

28. UN member states and agencies, when considering peace and security or economic development, craft policies that protect the poor who depend on animals for a livelihood.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

29. It is important to include NGO's, universities, government agencies and the private sector in addition to the governments and multilateral agencies in the rural development debate and to promote an integrated vision of rural development.

30. Receiving States should recognize the contribution to their economies of migrant workers by granting such workers the opportunity to remain with regular status and to integrate into Society, if that is their wish.

TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY

31. Participants underline the important role that information technology plays in the employment sector, mentioning the formulation of technology-based projects as an example of one of the tools facilitating the creation of jobs.

32. The main target of technological innovation should not only be in the creation of new jobs but also in the improvement of the existing ones while taking a greater advantage of the opportunities that technology offered to generate employment adding value to the economies of countries while improving competitiveness and productivity.

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Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development

Statement submitted by non-governmental organizations participating in the Economic and Social Council Non-Governmental Organization Forum (Part II)

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

The ECOSOC NGO Forum this year was held in two parts; while NGO Forum Part I was held on 6 April 2006, NGO Forum Part II incorporating infopoverty as a theme titled, "VI Infopoverty World Conference" was held on 20-21 April 2006. Active participation to the NGO Forum was facilitated by the two pilot countries of the United Nations Public Private Alliance for Rural Development, Madagascar and the Dominican Republic. The NGO Forum brought forth participation, recommendations and contributions through videoconferencing and teleconference links from parallel sessions being held in 8 cities by ITA, including Moscow, Sambaina (Madagascar), Milan (Italy), Arusha (United Republic of Tanzania), Window Rock (Navajo Nation), Sao Paolo (Brazil) and Lima.

The NGO Forum in New York was attended by 173 representatives of over 135 organizations. The multi-stakeholder participation brought contributions of civil society and major stakeholders to the 2006 High Level Segment of ECOSOC. The outcome of this meeting will be presented at the HLS of ECOSOC (3-5 July 2006) at Geneva in the form of a coalition statement.

The NGO Forum received valuable contributions from Congresswoman, Ms. Loretta Sanchez, Senator, Mr. John Kerry, Mr. Joe Shirley Jr., President, Navajo Nation, H.E. Ambassador Zina Andrianarivelo-Razafy, Permanent Mission of Madagascar to the United Nations, H.E. Ambassador Francis Lorenzo, Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations, Mr. Gaddi H. Vasque, Director Peace Corps Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury Under-Secretary General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Mr. Sarbuland Khan, Director, ECOSOC Support and Coordination, Ms. Hanifa Mezoui, Chief, NGO Section/ DESA, Mr. Vincenzo Aquaro, CEO, Formit Servizi, Mr. Abdul W. Khan, Assistant Director General, UNESCO, Ms. Maria Grazia Cavenaghi Smith, Director, European Parliament Office in Milan.

While issues, themes and best practices that can address the digital divide and concerns of Infopoverty remained the focus, the discussions also brought in strong recommendations towards generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development including the integration of ICTs as a tool for development and bridging the digital divide by strengthening and identifying Public-Private Partnerships.

Many new Partnerships and Best Practices were showcased at the NGO Forum, foremost being the partnership initiative with United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development, which in itself was established to identify, highlight, and promote replication of successful business policies and practices that are both profitable and promote social and economic advancement of poor people in rural areas. The prominent projects that were showcased included:

"One Dollar for Development", which was based on no-cost software technology transfer from developed to developing countries at the symbolic price of one dollar. The underlying rationale for this initiative is that, sustainable MDG-based strategies of developing countries require significant public investments to spur local scientific innovation and technological development. There are many Countries, which have successfully developed and deployed e-Government applications in many key areas such as Justice, Security, Healthcare, Welfare, Transport and Education. Without

having to reinvest and at a fraction of the initial development costs, most of these applications could be easily duplicated, re-deployed and put in use in developing countries to support local innovation and technological development with far reaching impacts on the national economy in general and in the field of governance in particular. The ODFD initiative aims at making available at no cost e-Government applications owned by developed countries to developing countries by encouraging the North-South and South-South cooperation as an effective contribution to development and as a means to share and transfer good practices and technologies.

ICT Village-The project has the objective of Creation of a replicable and affordable model to grant to disadvantaged community in the Dominican Republic access to the digital revolution and reap its opportunities for a sustainable development, thanks to the convergence of UN system agencies and programmes, as well as leading private companies and the civil society. To experiment on the field the most advanced technologies, applications and services that are both fit to the needs of the communities and easy to use by all, so that positive effects can be rapidly achieved: providing solutions to emergencies (in fields such as health, education, food & water) and spurring endogenous development (creating jobs, building capacity, promoting the communitarian participation of all).

In order to realize those goals, the project is intended to provide connectivity to a village in Madagascar to deliver to its population the following advanced services: Telemedicine, E-learning, E-government, E-commerce. The project will be implemented in a village in the Dominican Republic chosen in agreement with the Government of the Dominican Republic and relevant institutions involved in the UN Alliance.

Navajo Nation-The Navajo Nation is now using ICT of its own to deliver distance learning, economic opportunity, telemedicine, e-government and public safety to remote communities throughout its 27,000-square mile land base. ITU has recognized the work done by the Navajo Nation to bring information, communications and technology to its citizens as one of the most advanced systems in the emerging nations and one that can be reproduced by other indigenous nations. Because of this, the Navajo Nation is expected to take a leadership role to represent indigenous issues to the world beginning with this summit. Today, all 110 Navajo chapters now have free wireless Internet connections and computers where any Navajo can have an e-mail address and get online for free. In addition, every chapter and most Navajo Nation divisions, departments and programs have their own websites. "The most important thing is that our people are communicating with their government, and their government is communicating with them," President Shirley said. "As President, I need to hear from my people, whether they are in a community center or living far away from Navajo land, whether working, in school, or serving in the armed forces in a foreign country."

Specific recommendations from Milan focused on the synergy that should be created with the projects being showcased, mentioning specifically about The "OCCAM ICT Villages" and "the FORMIT One Dollar For Development" are projects that can run together because absolutely complementary and compliant. The first one is about ICT infrastructure and the second one is about ICT software applications and these two projects if developed together can become a perfect ICT package ready to be used by developing countries.

Focusing on the pilot countries of the UN Public Private Alliance that were the focus of the forum, it was noted that many developing countries like Madagascar and

Dominican Republic are already well-involved in process of achieving the MDGs and have launched their own ICT strategy. These have been done by identifying and establishing new form of cooperation with multi-stakeholders, linking governments, Academia, the private sector, NGOs and international organizations, and supported by a clear and farsighted governmental strategy for development. Because of that, these Countries are ready right now to implement and take advantage of this new ICT package because they have already an ICT Village and they have already started to talk about "One dollar for development".

The role of Donors was also emphasized. It was highlighted that donors could support developing countries and launch this new ICT package which needs software applications from donors, coming from Public and Private sector. Public donors were defined giving the example of the Government and institutions, and to think how much they had already invested and developed in e-governance software applications that can easily donate to support developing countries. Elaborated in the scope were other donors for e.g. France, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Spain, and also the European Parliament, European organizations and the other not European G-8 Countries. All of them have development best practices in ICT and all of them can donate at no cost even only one-application already in use in key areas such as healthcare, justice, welfare, Transportation, Education. In the end of the forum a draft declaration was adopted. Additionally, the recommendations called upon all the stakeholders to go beyond access by engaging multi-stakeholders, engaging local participants as partners in the process. The process/initiatives should have cultural relevance; they must be very creative, in reaching out to larger, more diverse populations. Strengthening human capacity in the areas of e-governance and public administration was also emphasized in various recommendations.

As regards job creation and employment generation the ICT tools should be used to stimulate inputs from agriculture and non-traditional sectors. The draft declaration also called upon governments and intergovernmental organizations to use both traditional and ICT methods to enable access to national and international markets, in order to stimulate the creation of decent work through the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises.